

The Town Meeting Procedures Committee Report

2015 Annual Town Meeting - April 27, 2015

The Town Meeting Procedures Committee, John L. Worden III, Wes Beal, James M. O'Conor, Assistant Moderator and John D. Leone Moderator, met on April 22, 2015, in order to discuss the Articles that directly affect Town Meeting and its procedures and reports as follows:

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to amend Title I, Article 1, Section 7C of the Town Bylaws, Regulation of Speakers, by further limiting the time a person shall speak, or otherwise hold the floor, for the purpose of presenting reports and announcements or any other remarks that do not pertain to an actionable article in the warrant; or take any action related thereto. (Inserted at the request of Paul Schlichtman and ten registered voters)

It was the consensus of the Committee that this proposed Bylaw amendment is unnecessary as the Moderator, pursuant to G.L. c. 39 §15, presides and has the authority to regulate the proceedings of Town Meeting, including the regulation of speakers. This includes the ability to restrict speakers presenting reports and announcements. It is the Moderator's intention to restrict those speaking presenting reports and announcements to four (4) minutes based upon his poll of members at the 2014 Town Meeting, and as such, no further bylaw regulations are necessary.

The Committee recommends that the Substitute Motion as follows be voted upon favorably and that immediately following that Town Meeting then votes against the recommended vote under Article 8 as substituted.

The Bylaw would then be as follows, the amended language is in italics.

Title I, Article 1, Section 7(C) ("Regulation of Speakers"):

No person shall speak, or otherwise hold the floor, for the first time on any subject for more than seven minutes, unless, prior to beginning his or her presentation, the person requests of the Town Meeting a specific extension of time, and the request is granted by a majority vote of the Town Meeting members present and voting.

No person shall speak, or otherwise hold the floor, for a second time on any subject for more than five minutes.

No person shall speak, or otherwise hold the floor, more than twice on any subject except to correct an error, without first obtaining permission of the meeting by obtaining a majority vote of the Town Meeting Members present and voting. After obtaining said permission, the person shall not speak, or otherwise hold the floor, for more than five minutes.

No person shall speak, or otherwise hold the floor on any matter brought up under the Article concerning reports of Committees or under the agenda category for announcements and resolutions, for more than four minutes, unless, prior to beginning his or her presentation, the person requests of the Town Meeting a specific extension of time, and the request is granted by a majority vote of the Town Meeting members present and voting. Nothing set forth in this bylaw shall be construed to limit the discretion of the Town Moderator to regulate the conduct of the meeting.

Arlington Town Meeting – Motion

ARTICLE NO.8

Dated: April 27, 2015

The Town Meeting Procedures Committee does hereby submit the following Motion:
VOTED:

That Title I, Article 1, Section 7(C), of the Town Bylaws ("Time Limits") by amended by Inserting the following language after the third paragraph:

No person shall speak, or otherwise hold the floor on any matter brought up under the Article concerning reports of Committees or under the agenda category for announcements and resolutions, for more than four minutes, unless, prior to beginning his or her presentation, the person requests of the Town Meeting a specific extension of time, and the request is granted by a majority vote of the Town Meeting members present and voting. Nothing set forth in this bylaw shall be construed to limit the discretion of the Town Moderator to regulate the conduct of the meeting.

Signed:

John L. Worden III, Precinct 8,

The Town Meeting Procedures Committee:
John L. Worden III, Wes Beal,
James M. O'Conor, Assistant Moderator, and
John D. Leone Moderator

Date Voted: _____

Action Taken: _____

ARTICLE 45: To see if the Town will vote to direct the Town Meeting Procedures Committee to investigate and recommend a process for removing Town Meeting Members from their office if they fail to attend a sufficient number of Town Meetings during their term in office; or take any action related thereto. (Inserted at the Request of the Town Moderator and Town Meeting Procedures Committee)

As a representative Town Meeting, it is important that the elected members actually attend and conduct the Town's business. Article 45 seeks the direction of the Meeting and if it wishes to instruct the Town Meeting Procedures Committee to investigate and propose a Bylaw for the removal of Town Meeting members who are not attending at least a certain percentage of meeting in any given year. Such as, if one fails to attend at least 25% of the meetings then that person could be removed. (i.e. if you do not make it to at least 3 meeting out of 10, or, 2 out of 5, you would be subject to removal). The specific percentage is also up for debate. Last year 30 of our members missed at least half of the sessions.

Other Towns have removal procedures. Among the options, as used in Framingham, is that a Town Meeting Member who does not attend at least twenty-five (25) per cent of the Town Meeting sessions within one year then that member shall be deemed to have abandoned that office.

Another approach, used in Reading, is that if any Member fails to attend one-half or more of the total Town Meeting sessions within one year his/her seat may be declared vacant by a majority vote of Town Meeting. This requires that the Selectmen place an Article in the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to remove any such persons and that the Town Clerk must notify any such persons that they may be removed at least seven (7) days in advance of the Annual Town Meeting. The Town Meeting itself must then vote to removal.

The Committee recommends that the Motion as follows be voted upon favorably.

Arlington Town Meeting – Motion

ARTICLE NO.45

Dated: April 27, 2015

VOTED:

That the Town hereby directs the Town Meetings Procedures Committee to study and to report back to and make recommendations to future Town Meetings for Bylaws Amendments allowing for a process for removing Town Meeting Members from their office if they fail to attend a sufficient number of Town Meetings sessions during their term in office.

Signed:

James M. O'Conor, Precinct 19,

The Town Meeting Procedures Committee:
John L. Worden III, Wes Beal,
James M. O'Conor, Assistant Moderator, and
John D. Leone Moderator

Date Voted: _____

Action Taken: _____